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THE
HARP OF HIRAETH

E. HOWARD HARRIS

THE HARP OF HIRAETH

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

AN EXILE'S LUTE

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THE HARP OF HIRAETH

BY
E. HOWARD HARRIS
Author of "An Exile's Lute"

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THE HARP OF HIRAETH

PROLOGUE

O hiraeth harp ! the lure of land,
The love of home, the love of maid,
The fingers of a Northern hand
 To exile heart conveyed.

The mountains old, the golden sand,
To hold is sweet, to lose is sharp,
To dream within a Northern land ;
 O hiraeth harp !

Largamente

HAVEN

LITTLE land beside the sea,
Pass in panoramic view ;
Wave on wave of melody
 Bear thee up anew.

Little land beside the sea,
Happy are thy hearths to-night ;
Anchored is my heart in thee,
 Haven of delight.

Little land beside the sea,
All thy sweet surprises start ;
Borne by wave of melody
 Pulse within my heart.

Affettuoso

AMOR MATRIS

IF sunk in sin and fallen deep in guilt,
Haunted by Nemesis by night and day,
Feeding on husks until dire hunger slay
My life, all choked with vile and sinful silt,
And life upon a fragile sandbank built,
I would to thee in secret suffering pray,
And call thee as the traveller calls the day
Steeped as I was in sorrow to the hilt ;
Speedy as bird that seeks its ravished nest ;
Straight as an arrow speeding to its rest,
You would set out, and come to my abode ;
Your love would share the pain and ease the load.
Yes, I should hear it (though all else should shun),
Thy voice, before thy coming, " Oh, Absalom, my
son ! "

Abbandone

FIRST APPEARING

OH, say you are no transient dream,
That will depart at dawn !
Things often are not what they seem,
They mock our hope with scorn.

Your bosom's bright as Bronwen's bloom,
And Olwen's hue is thine,
Your hair is like the yellow broom,
Oh, could I call you mine !

Your feet are lilies on the leas,
Your fingers sorrels white,
Your eyes are blue anemones
That wake upon my sight.

You're mellower than the pale moonbeam,
And lovelier than morn ;
The maiden of the flowers you seem
By Gwydion's magic born.

Things often are not what they seem,
They mock our hope with scorn ;
Oh, say you are no transient dream
That will depart at dawn !

Tremulo

TRYST

MORFUDD ! the doves are cooing
And I come wooing,
Maiden fair.
Morfudd ! I come confessing
My love possessing.
Are you there ?

Morfudd ! the doves are mating,
And I am waiting,
Maiden fair.
My dovecote lonely
Waits for you only.
Will you share ?

Morfudd ! my love is tender ;
Soft surrender,
Maiden fair.
Oh, lovely capture !
(Ah ! what's this rapture ?)
You are there.

Giojoso

THE DOVECOTE

WHEN sweet surrender and the soft confession,
The touch of arms, and kiss of first possession,
 Come after wooing,
A murmured music in the dovecote's dwelling
 The doves are cooing.

World, with your marts of gain, and halls of
 learning,
And shrines of fame, where incense sweet is
 burning,
 You dimly shine.
If in your realm the dovecotes are dismantled
 It is—decline.

UNION

ALL else is nothing worth ;
See, with the choicest metal of the earth
 I bind you !
It is the great round world, and all my world
 I find you.

Tranquillo

HALCYON DAYS

I CROWN you queen of all the halcyon sea ;
Earth has no beauty to surpass a bride ;
Your happy smile is rich reward for me,
 And rapture by your side.

And you shall float out on the halcyon sea ;
And take no count of time or sea or sky ;
And know no thought except felicity ;
 And ask no reason why.

Now as I crown you by the halcyon sea,
With all I know that will delight you best,
I now ensure, when falls felicity,
 Your calm upon my breast.

Tremulo

NEW VISION

I NEVER knew you, dear, so much,
As when a shaft of winter yew,
From May's own shining quiver ta'en,
Had laid me on a bed of pain,
 I saw you—and I knew.

I never knew you, dear, so much,
The real vital soul of you,
That tender care, and loving mind,
A thousand things that lay behind,
 I saw them—and I knew.

Sforzando

THE WEREWOLF

STEALTHY with bloody maw, the werewolf through
 the wood
 Paws his dread way.
What cares he for the rich, the wise, the good ?
 He comes to slay.

My God ! his shadow falls upon my threshold
 floor,
 And will he cross ?
And snatch that one, add that one more
 To sum of loss ?
Hence ! hellhound ! Hence ! slay me, but spare
 thy paw ;
 (For dear is she.)
I give my body ransom, hold it in thy jaw ;
 Surfeit on me.

Agitato

THE FOREST

My love strayed to the forest, where I could not
 stray ;
My love through the miasmic jungle passed away
 Beyond my ken.
The werewolf, Pestilence, cut off my love from me ;
I, who had seen him look, but pass by me,
 Escaped his den.
I said hot words to God, and Sarah-like I turned :
No Job was I ; awhile a fierce resentment burned
 'Gainst felon blow.
Passing the shrines of Belial and Gadarene swine,
Why didst Thou take this all in all of mine ?
 I wished to know.
I see the werewolf pawing on the ways of death,
And feel the forest dark, and breathe the fœtid
 breath
 Of pestilential breeze.
They say 'tis mystery, and not a wild mistake.
Friends, judge me gently, for I cannot take
 The meaning—for the trees.

Doloroso

THE BARD BEREFT

THE youthful Clydno brings his bride ;
That matron she is Modron's wife ;
And withered Cadvan sits beside
The partner of his life.

They laugh beside the loaded board ;
They call me with their festive glee ;
But something like a flaming sword
Shuts Paradise from me.

For they are happy with their own ;
I know their hearts are kind ;
Life lengthens long, and love has grown,
They look before, behind.

But I am thinking of the earth ;
And sharper than the shafts of strife,
With all their innocence of mirth
They stab me with their joys of life.

Lacrimoso

SORROW AND SNOW

THE lovely maiden Earth is dead ;
Old Winter wraps her in his pall ;
The trees bareheaded by her bed,
The stars are candles in the hall.

Tiptoe the little snowflakes come,
And gather as in Camelot,
They gazed in silence, and were dumb
Before the Lady of Shalott.

Ah, me, she is but sleeping there,
She will arise a maiden free,
And run her cycles through the year
And come again to me.

But there are some who passed them through,
But never reached the autumn stage,
They died in summer ; never knew
The lost but lovely dreams of age.

And now the little memories come,
The griefs like snowflakes falling slow,
They bring a silence that is dumb :
A deeper silence than the snow.

HIRAETH

You came with lovelight in your eyes last night ;
I felt the touches of your gentle hands ;
Your grace of movement waked upon my sight ;
And dream supplied all that my soul demands.

I sought you not by crude mechanic means,
And yet you brought sweet messages to me :
You drew apart the shadowy veil that screens
My life from yours, wherever you may be.

I had you for one long fierce hour last night ;
I only know its rapture and its bliss ;
I saw your hair like threads of amber light,
And felt the burning of our kiss on kiss.

But waking came, and faded with the night
The vision born of memories of yore,
Of vain regrets, and as you left my sight,
You left a deeper hiraeth than before.

IF

IF I could launch my mortal bark
Upon the seas of death,
If I could cross the waters dark
Borne by celestial breath,
I know between the lilies tall
My lady waiteth me,
There is no rapture in the hall
Could match that ecstasy.

But rocks within this harbour bar
My tossing mortal bark ;
The noises of the shipping mar
The silence of the dark ;
And though the deep is calling me,
'Tis willed that I must stay
And heap the heavy cargo in
That fills me night and day.

If I could launch my mortal bark
Upon the seas of death,
If I could cross the waters dark
Borne by celestial breath,
I'd see the stately lilies tall,
But I should look above,
And steer my vessel to the wall
Deep-freighted with my love.

Appassionato

THE TRIUMPH OF HIRAETH

I PLAY upon the strings of pain ;
I cannot sing of youthful joy ;
The skies are grey, and life is vain,
The man has overgrown the boy.

My very songs seem useless sung ;
They float upon an idle air.
I know the time they would have rung
Like joy bells void of care.

Perhaps the anthems of the sky
Make poor these little songs of mine,
And yet I see you standing by
And listening to their every line.

And then I do not find despair
In all these little songs of mine ;
My love is singing to you there ;
I triumph in the theme divine.

EPILOGUE

O hiraeth harp ! thy varied strains,
Exulting joy and plaintive pain,
For ever in my heart remain
Thy sunshine and thy rain.

The halcyon days, the bated breath,
Of anxious care in seasons sharp,
The yearning passion after death,
O hiraeth harp !

SONGS OF THE SOUTH

A PREFERENCE

THE Welshman of the Northland, from mountain
and from carn,
Is stern and solid as the crags and deep as mountain
tain tarn.

The Welsh of Ceredigion with a herring and a
leek
Can often live in luxury throughout a blessed
week.

But like the frugal Scotchman, they do believe in
knowledge,
They skin themselves for ages, but they put their
sons in college.

Within the southern shirelands there is the English
“Pem.”
They say Old Nick o’erloaded passed through it—
dropping them.

But still these frugal, stolid folk had sense to come
to Wales,
To warm themselves beside the fires that burn in
Celtic vales.

The men of quaint Carmarthen, a quiet county
’tis,
Their Welsh they say’s the finest (I know their
butter is).

The people in the health resorts are learning
wicked ways ;
They're learning from the English to plunder him
who pays.

The men of old Glamorgan, brave, merry, lively be,
Or else, what is the meaning of the castles that you
see ?

And now the Rhondda miners are such a peppery
lot ;
The Welsh are often Irish, and the rest are—
polyglot.

If I were from the Northland, I should a North-
man be,
And chant the song of Gwyneth from Arvon to
the Dee,

If I were from the Midlands, I should feel myself
a peer,
And sing the song of Powis, and all the " Cardis "
cheer,

But I am from Glamorgan, that made its prowess
felt ;
There's just a touch of Saxon to mingle with the
Celt.

So you may sing of Powis, and all the shires that be,
But the land of old Morganwg is the little land
for me.

ON APPROACHING LANDORE

I HEARD a wag within the Irish Mail
Say, "This is what they call down here Landore.
Old Billie Burke, when three sheets in the wind,
Sleeping from Paddington, dreamed that he had
sinned

And wakened up in —, well
Some place I need not tell."

I looked without ; the blackened hillside
Heaved with ant-hills of rough slag ;
The furnace glared ; the smoking stacks beside
Were there ; but—I forgot the wag.
For I could see beyond ; an arch of golden sand,
A lighthouse on its pedestal of rock,
And the blue sea push tongues of water in the land,
And meet the cliff with thunder of its shock ;
The chimney-stacks had faded from my view,
Or perhaps to speak more true,
Passed through the alembic of my heart and brain,
And were rebuilt again.
Such alchemy is in the heart of man ;
Through smoky air,
That now they seem more fair
Than domes and minarets of Ispahan.

A PLATE OF SWANSEA CHINA

I FOUND you in an antique shop by happy chance,
Amid a mingled mass of curios old and quaint ;
There cheek by jowl beside a plaster saint
Modelled in Italy ; a god Celestial ; and a fan of
 France ;
Above you hung and shone an ancient Indian
 lance ;
Before arrayed some cut-glass bottles ranged upon
 a tray ;
But yet I had no eyes for all the rich display ;
They vanished quite in light of old romance ;
When Cuban argosies, freighted with cupric ore,
Crept to the harbour, you were fashioned then
By some old kindred craftsman ; and you bore
A fair device conceived by Swansea men.
You were a burnished mirror ; in you clearly shone
The town, and bay of beauty Landor looked upon.

THE SAGA STRAND

AN OXWICH SONNET

TWILIGHT of silver-grey resting on tranquil sea ;
There in the offing, motionless and mute,
A Swansea steamer ; now a bright salute—
The meteor flash of lightship o'er the sea.
The present fades ; the Saga past for me
Wakes into being ; round the headland creep
The raven sails of rovers of the deep ;
The blue-eyed Vikings, fierce and fair and free
The rhythmic stroke of oars within the bay,
The sea alive with Norseman and with Celt,
With shining shields and wings ; again I felt
The epic grandeur of titanic fray.
Then fades the scene, and fading leaves to me
Twilight of silver-grey, and calm of opal sea.

A HEADLAND FANTASY

I look from shadowy land to shadowy sea,
Untouched as yet by star or lunar beam,
The shimmering air is holding mystery,
And fading earth is tremulous as dream.

The hush wakes music now surpassing sweet,
The fragrant air is odorous as musk,
The still cold earth is waiting for the feet
Of some soft-sandalled damsel of the dusk.

The hills in fading whisper, "It is she!"
Blue, blent with silver-grey, are Gower skies,
And as they deepen in the eve, I see
The gleaming of her wonder-waking eyes.

MOON MAGIC

THE roseate flush, dim Devon o'er the sea,
The star of eve set in the brow of night,
Proclaim the coming of the Queen to me,
When Kingly Day has winged his glorious flight.

Night comes with sandalled feet upon the shore,
Trailing her ebon mantle rich and rare,
Holding her moon-lamp the dim waters o'er,
Above the jewels in her raven hair.

My faith asserts that when at eventide,
Her hidden glories Nature designs to show,
The veil is raised, and we behold the bride,
Into whose beauty earth and sky shall grow.

I ask no boon of gain more great than this,
No richer treasure in my heart to hold,
Than to press on, and find where moonbeams kiss,
The elfin secret of yon rippling gold.

THE FISHERMAN

ONCE beside the yellow sand
And the coves of Gowerland,
From my net there struggled free
Something that swam out to sea.

The sunlit crests of gold
Were the tresses of her hair ;
Her eyes were blue as heaven,
Her heaving shoulders bare.

The whitening curls of foam
Were her bosoms fair to see ;
She smiled a lovely sea smile
From the mirror of the sea.

“ Come and leave the servile land,”
Said that something from the sea,
“ For the sloping sandy shore
Is the stairway of the free.”

ENVOI.

Perhaps beside the yellow sand
I shall catch her in my hand ;
You shall never struggle free,
Little fish of fantasie !
Till from you I understand
All the secrets of the sea.

MY RURAL COLLEAGUE

I WILL arise and visit him again,
My friend within the vales ;
He has a little rural school
In the South of winsome Wales.

A little red-tiled rural school
With a little house beside ;
And rambler roses on the walls
His little house to hide.

No Cinderellas will remain
Within his rural school ;
The best for them, the best for him
Will be, I know, the rule.

And when I ask him of his books
My " Orbilius " in " rus "
He'll smile and beckon with his hand
I know, he's managed thus.

He has a little study set
To overlook the lawn ;
And fragrant flowers beside the wall
To usher in the dawn.

" You see I have a pile of books
(They're raising stipends now),*
My blessings, Burnham, on thy head ;
My purse will now allow

* 1919

A visit, or a parcel small
From London, where I find to hand,
At Charing Cross upon a stall,
A treasure second-hand."

Old friend, I left the work you do,
For higher work and pleasure ;
And yet I often think of you
When languishing for leisure.

Old friend, take greeting from the place
Of houses huddled nearer ;
I sometimes think your choice of life
Shows intuition clearer.

PRAYER IN TY. CAPEL

NANCY'S HIRAETH

WITH her head in reverence bending,
Thus she seeks the throne of grace ;
Whispers low her intercession,
Wrestling long and face to face.

“ Arglwyd Jesu ! save my Evan !
He has slumbered on my breast ;
I have rocked him in the cradle ;
I have loved him still the best.

Not the ninety-nine Thou seekest,
But the one that's lost awhile.
Save ! Oh, save my erring Ianto !
Send to him Thy gracious smile.

I am weak, but Thou art mighty ;
I, of all Thy saints the least ;
Touch him with Thy loving finger,
Arglwyd anwyl, Jesu Crist.”

Rose her voice in yearning passion :
“ I, of all Thy saints the least ;
Touch him in Thy own strong fashion,
Arglwyd anwyl, Jesu Crist.”

APOLOGIA

You ask me why I sing of women virtuous and old,
While maidens gleaming from the days of old
Await my song ; why tune the lute and try
The tale of common folk to tell, and why
With all the witchery of Egypt's royal queen,
The brow of Helen, or the flaming sheen
Of Mabinogion maids, or Saga women's dauntless
mien,

I could attune its strings and launch a song.
I am not blind to these, and yet I ween,
It is because the world is full of wrong ;
For tinsel hurrying in a mad pursuit,
And like the traveller sees the golden fruit,
And hunger lured is eager in pursuit,
To find it fall to vanity and dust,
All Dead Sea apples ; so to turn I must,
To save my soul from pessimism sore,
To simple souls sweet to the very core.
In this the tropic jungle of our life,
Amid the forest cries, and sounds of strife,
I hear a voice, " We are not wholly lost,
There is a note above the yelps of life
Shall rise to pæan when the snarling dies,
Earth's discord fades, Heaven's harmonies arise ;
Love like the moon shall conquer its eclipse
And flood the world with ecstasy of light ;
This sick and fretful world, that in its darkness lies,
Would fall to hell if underneath its weight
The arms of kindness did not bear it up,
The love of men deep in their brazen breasts,
The love of woman drinking up the cup.
In love alone is secret of new birth,
And such as these the salt of all the earth."

ENVOI

TO MY COUNTRY

OVER the mountains the night shroud is lifting,
Feet shod with splendour arise on the height,
Music from morn through the clear air is drifting,
Gone are the hounds of the kingdom of night.

Dost thou not hear in the darkness receding
Faint are their cries in the rustling of corn ?
Life—it is victor, and Love—it is leading,
Silent the hounds in the halls of the dawn.

Mighty the dreams shapen deep in the gloaming,
Mighty the Awen that wakes in the womb ;
Summer is come—and the swallows are homing ;
Gone are the whelps of the darkness and gloom.

Bring from thy slumber thy dowry of dreaming,
Past is the darkness and shadow of scorn ;
Music is moving, and passion is gleaming ;
Sell not thy soul at the breaking of morn.

THE WAND OF GWYDION

THE pedlars bent, and weary with their load,
Trudge o'er the white monotony of road ;
Gain drives them dry and dusty like a goad ;
And I with them a Sinbad pack convey,
And yearn for covert from the heat of day.

But I beheld a path to soothing shade :
A grateful gloom by the dim forest made,
A healing twilight where the white roads fade,
A fragrant bower where elfin blossoms grow,
And trees in wind like pipes of organ blow.

“Perchance,” said I, “yon faery fields forlorn
May bring the fragrant coolness of the morn,
And daffodils flash upward like the dawn ;
Here will I enter and my youth renew
And see the wonders that the white roads slew.”

And so I passed the portals of the trees,
Kept by a sybil of Earth's mysteries,
A solemn fane with incense-bearing breeze ;
And as I walked the leafy aisles along,
I sang with hope that one might hear my song.

*I will seek Beauty :
Her I will discover ;
If I find her,
She will find me—a lover.*

*With shoes of Atalanta
Are shod Wild Beauty's feet,
And fleet be they who follow,
And happy they who meet.*

*I will seek Beauty :
Her I will discover ;
I too am shod
With sandals of a lover.*

*With shoes of Atalanta
Are shod Wild Beauty's feet,
And many are her lovers
With sandals of defeat.*

*I will seek Beauty :
Her I will discover ;
I am Melanion,
Eager ardent lover.*

*You will not see her stopping,
Though swift as prairie fire,
Unless on pathway dropping
The apples of desire.*

*I will find Beauty :
Her I will discover ;
See here Melanion's
Apples of a lover !*

The voice that answered to my hiraeth's singing
Lured me through forest, to a clearing bringing,
My heart on fire and with a clear bell ringing ;
Beside an oak a sleeping form was lying :
His white hair like a cataract was flying.

'Twas sleeping Gwydion—deep within his dream-
ing ;

The moonlight on his silver hair was streaming,
And round him flowers of fantasy were gleaming.

“ He will for me my happy youth renew,
And wake the wonders that the white roads slew.

Gwydion arise ! it is my hiraeth's singing !
Set once again thy wand of wizard winging,
All the shot-silk of fantasy still bringing
From old romance ; a lover calls for beauty ;
Heavy with care, and dusty white with duty.”

He stirred from sleep and murmured in replying,
“ Trouble me not, and cease your futile sighing ;
In this grey world dead Beauty is low lying ;
Shoulder your pack and tinsel take for gold,
For Beauty died, when died the days of old.”

“ But I will see her, Gwydion, hear my pleading !
The wine of dawn my weary soul is needing ;
Some food of fantasy sufficient for my feeding ” ;
At this he rose, his eyes were full of fire :
“ Stranger,” said he, “ naught wakes me but
desire.”

Then he took up his wand and gently holding,
In the dark blossom of the night unfolding,
A shimmering mist of rosy dawn beholding,
Upon a white and matchless horse abiding
I saw out of its heart—Rhiannon riding.

She rode in beauty, and a light shone round her :
A silken robe of primrosed purple bound her ;
As a bright star in a dark place I found her ;
And 'neath her proud arch-necked white palfrey
prancing,
The jewelled flowers flame-daffodils were danc-
ing.

Shone, winged, and sang, before Rhiannon riding
Three wondrous birds in wizard beauty gliding ;
Now afar off, and now by her abiding ;
Now like three clouds torn rosy from the dawn ;
Then like three moons in winter twilight born.

So came Rhiannon through the flame mist's
shimmer,
Fairer than sea sunlit, or moonlight's glimmer ;
Her birds in darkening sky at last grew dimmer ;
But from their wings dropped music in a rapture ;
I wondered if with words I could it capture.

*Far from the tumult lie
Islands of calm ;
Trees in enchanted sky
Dropping their balm.*

*Far from the tumult lie
Islands of light ;
Up with us to the sky
Faith fades to sight.*

*There tumult noises die,
Islands of love ;
Up with us to the sky,
Beauty's above.*

*There tumult noises die,
Paradise share ;
Beauty, bereft of sigh,
Croons over care.*

Then Gwydion showed Pryderi's cradled bed,
And elfin harpers playing at the head,
Their irised wings flashed green and blue and red ;
Their eyes were fathomless with antique dreams,
That came and went, as dragon-flies on streams.

Upon his pillow lay that radiant head,
A faery halo round his slumber shed,
The elfin harpers flashed in green and red ;
Heavy with scent the wonder blossoms shone ;
I caught the strain before the scene was gone.

*Rest, Prince of Dyfed, rest
Under the lonely moon :
Doing will come too soon ;
Dreaming is best.*

*Rest, Prince of Dyfed, rest :
Beauty alone hath bloom ;
She hath no death or doom
In her white breast.*

*Rest, Prince of Dyfed, rest :
Seek not the morn's release ;
Sleep in the shining peace
Of Beauty's breast.*

*Rest, Prince of Dyfed, rest
In our unfathomed joy ;
Slumber, thou radiant boy ;
Dreaming is best.*

Again did Gwydion's magic wand reveal,
And Bronwen's sad and lovely face did steal
Upon mine eyes, and made my own heart feel
Her anguish deep, when she at Harlech cried,
" By me, alas ! two people's peace has died."

*" I have seen life pass by me like a cloud,
Light as a feather, rosy with the dawn ;
Then overcast as with the sunlight's scorn.
I have seen sorrow come instead of love ;
Then sure deliverance come from exile pain ;
Then Death lead Sorrow to my heart again.
I have seen peace destroyed because of me ;
I will lie down (it is too sad to live)
And seek the quiet peace I could not give."*

" Gwydion," said I, " grant me this boon I crave :
Bring forth thy Blossom Bride from flowery
grave."

A wondrous music woke as he his wand did wave ;
Blossoms of broom, white sorrels, blue anemones
Swarmed like gay butterflies upon the leas.

The sorrels grew into her fair white feet,
The blue anemones in lovely eyelids meet,
Hair broom-flower yellow falling to her feet,
The flush of life came through her naked form,
The fluttering flowers became a woman warm.

Then Gwydion waved, the fleeting fancy chang-
ing ;

I saw the stage for beauty new arranging,
A form in mist into white Olwen changing ;
And as her ruddy beauty through me shivered,
Beneath her feet the emerald trefoils quivered.

And then I saw a white strained palfrey riding
Through the green meads, and on its back abiding
A youth aflame, the noble steed was guiding ;
Lean jewelled greyhounds bounded by his side :
'Twas eager Kilwch questing of his bride.

*“ Maiden of the swan-breast, linger :
Kilwch seeks thee for his bride ;
White as sorrel is thy finger,
Yellow is thy tresses' pride.
Hear, I pray !
Maiden, stay !
Kilwch seeks thee for his bride.*

*He who sees thee, loves for ever ;
For your footfall I have sighed ;
Love and Beauty naught can sever ;
Olwen, Lily Maid, abide !
Hear, I pray !
Maiden, stay !
Kilwch seeks thee for his bride.”*

Then Gwydion waved, and from young Elphin's
weir

I saw a brow of radiant health appear ;
I heard a speech sage, eloquent and clear ;
'Twas Taliesin, of the bards supreme,
That Elphin netted from enchanted stream.

To him Caridwen taught the sacred lore ;
I saw the pearl-rimmed cauldron on the shore,
And all the forms Protean that he bore :
All the strange cycles, those through which he ran,
From radiant forms into the radiant man.

* * * * *

The forest faded, and enchantment fled :
The road was white, the sun above my head
Shone pitiless ; but as I onward sped,
My pack was lighter, and like gentle dew,
Gleamed still the wonders that the white roads
slew.

THE ALIEN HARPER

I

URIEN was Lord of Dyfed, and his queen was Enid,
Sons had he seven. They varied in their temper ;
Sinnoch was big and brawny as an ox of Powys,
And with a voice as loud ; Kelin was small,
Bright-eyed and sleek and oily ;
Kynon came next, and he was dour in speech
And conduct ; narrow in view and hostile
To all strangers ; Bradwin came next,
And he was diffident and sheepish,
Little he spoke and in a halting fashion ;
Modron was mean, and Modron he was wily,
Once he had played the traitor to his father.
Ermid the peaceful was of broader culture ;
He was a singer, and of bards the favourite ;
Then there was one, whose name was rarely
spoken,
For woeful day that saw his dire departure,
He passed away like shadows fade in noonday ;
His fate was shrouded in mysterious question.

II

Once came to court a poor and alien harper,
Singing this song before the board of Dyfed—

*When She's arrayed in robe of silver sheen,
Fair as the dawn above a field of corn,
When we are summoned by the bridal queen,
When we are ushered to the halls of dawn,
Joyous we'll come to that long wished-for scene
To drink in rapture from the Hirlas horn.*

Thus to his brothers (Ermid not consenting)
Sinnoch roared out, "Down with this Saxon
harper !

Have we no bards within these halls of Dyfed
That we should listen to this alien singing ? "

III

So in an ambush they rushed out upon him :
Though fighting bravely, they by weight over-
whelmed him,

Tearing his tunic and his breast uncovered ;
Enid appeared, and rushed toward the figure,
Gazed for a moment, then a shriek broke from her,
" Cadvan ! thy brother ! see the mark upon him,"
Then fainting fell within the arms of Ermid.

Then they drew near, and on his breast all bleed-
ing,

A purple heart they saw and knew the symbol.

IV

Cadvan was dead, and in a mound they laid him :
Urien was sad, and Enid broken-hearted,
And as she went, they all will oft remember
These words she said to those assembled brothers,
" Hear me but once, before I enter in
The chamber of sweet memories to weep ;
My house of happiness ye might have built it up,
Not razed it to the ground, to build a house of
tears.

Once I did dream that summer came to me,
And crowned my life with garlands of sweet
flowers,

And the soft zephyrs played upon my face,
And here the roses bloomed ; but now,

Chill winter falls ; the flowers are nipped with
frost ;

The air is keen ; my heart is hollow,
Comfortless and void, as cave through which
The winter winds blow cold.

Cadvan is dead. It was thy blindness slew
The alien singer ; now his harp is mute ;
Oh, thoughtless folly ! blind and foolish rage !
Lifeless his fingers, ministers of love ;
Stilled is the strain of his own music sweet ;
Cadvan is dead. He, who the music bore,
That might have made the harmony complete.”

A MISCELLANY

SYREN SNOW

THE tundra stretches white and wide,
The moon green glimmers on the snow,
I see a phantom dog sledge glide,
That bears an elfin Eskimo.

From dim horizon speeds the sleigh,
The bells are tinkling in the snow,
The lights of polar spectrum play
Around the elfin Eskimo.

She smiles and waves a furry hand,
And slackens for a while the pace,
A sudden glory lights the land,
I catch the glamour of her face.

By happy chance, I bend and see
A fir cone lying on the snow ;
And then a feather floats to me,
I fix it on—and throw.

It falls into the phantom sleigh,
It is the love-dart that I throw ;
If she will only let it stay,
I win the elfin Eskimo.

'Tis joy ! she holds it in her hand,
And smiles at me across the snow ;
I make a stride—I understand
It is the elfin call to go.

She takes me to her snow hut white,
And fills a pan with blubber oils
And floating wicks ; in misty light
She tangles me within her toils.

Her movements hold me in a vice ;
Her finny fingers set the meal ;
She flops upon her ledge of ice ;
I see she is a maiden seal.

She pricks upon a walrus bone,
In picture writing quaint to see,
One graphic tale, and one alone,
The love of her and me.

I see her Monna-Lisa smile,
As on a bearskin bed I lie ;
And dark, inscrutable, the while,
The lure of her Mongolian eye.

* * * * *

" He's coming to, his life remains,"
Familiar voices faintly come ;
Warmth surges slowly thro' my veins ;
I feel, though I am dumb.

And though they bear me back awhile,
I must return, for never die
The spell of her seductive smile,
The lure of her Mongolian eye.

RAGNAROK

LAST night out from the purple vault of heaven,
I saw a soul that sinned fall through the night ;
The scars upon its countenance were seven,
The blood-marks on its blasted body bright.

Around it flashed in courses serpentine
The vivid lightning ominously wheeled,
In the brief blaze that lit the dark decline,
The drawn and writhing features stood revealed.

The clotted veins like knotted chords of green
Made savage all the countenance I saw,
In the brief blaze, that lit the dark ravine,
The hair dishevelled seared my soul with awe.

Swift as it sped, like some wild rushing wind,
I caught the hot contagion of its breath,
And moving back the purer air to find,
Heard the dry lips pronounce the name of
death.

When dumb surprise had quivered into speech,
I framed the question, " Who is this, I pray ? "
A voice replied, as speaking out of reach,
" This is the soul of him who did betray."

Fallen, forlorn, and still in deeper pain,
'Twas not unheeded that from heaven he fell ;
He is pursued through mist and blinding rain,
Through earth's fair fields and to the gloom of
Hell.

When he receives the last long kiss of peace
The world shall fall, the twilight shall ensue,
The evil perish and the tumult cease,
The world its pristine beauty shall renew.

“ I fain would follow, lead me on,” I said ;
A muffled figure touched me on the arm,
Then by a whirlwind down and down we sped
Through seas of cloud and continents of calm.

There in the distance sulphurous in light,
The fallen soul was speeding on its way ;
Till Earth appeared upon my ravished sight,
And scenes familiar grew in light of day.

Fallen, forlorn and still in deeper pain,
The soul was hurrying as a hare in chase,
Through haunts of vice and marts of sordid gain,
The sins of Earth were caught into its face.

Then in the black abyss where devilish laughter
dwells,
I heard the soul fast falling in the night ;
More strongly held than by a witch’s spells,
My soul in silence shuddered with affright.

“ Show me no more,” I cried dismayed again,
“ Cover the scene of this pursuit and strife ;
Give me my joy, and bid farewell to pain :
Is there but death behind this mask of life ? ”

But as I spoke, a figure I descried,
Float like a halo luminous as morn,
Upon a ledge, that from the mountain side
Hung ebon-black as thunderclouds at dawn.

And as the soul pursued its headlong flight,
I saw that form bend like a brooding dove,
And in the light of that revealing light,
Stands on his brow the sovereignty of love.

As passed the soul upon its wings of pain,
He seized the garments and beheld the scar,
And at his kiss were sin and sorrow slain,
The world's foundations trembled from afar.

As passed the soul upon its wings of pain,
He saw the anguish, and the marks that mar ;
And in his bosom as he rose again,
The ransomed world was glittering like a star.

AUTUMN SUNSET

A SONNET

THE sun now wields the wand of a magician.
In Rivington the evening shadows fall.
The air is fragrant, and the old school wall
Is grey no longer ; by the red transmission,
As tongues of fire the windows leap to vision,
Below the green top of the dreaming Pike.
The shadowy lakes, the bastion and the dyke,
All lead the way to this—my heart's decision :
Nature hath colours, that an artist seeks,
But seeks in vain ; It is the wizards weave
That silver grey shot with those crimson streaks,
Distilled by wondrous alchemy of eve,
The mystic calm, unbroken by the breeze,
The frail and lovely fretwork of the trees.

PEGGY

DID I see you on the green
Dancing in your shimmering sheen ?
Tell me now ! Where have you been,
Little pixy Peggy ?

When I tread the meadow grass,
Do you hear me as I pass ?
Does the foxglove hide you, lass,
Little pixy Peggy ?

Do your little elfin smiles,
Running in their rippling files,
Come from home of fairy wiles,
Little pixy Peggy ?

We have lost our fairy eyes ;
We have forfeited surprise ;
Care upon our eyelids lies,
Little pixy Peggy.

Oh, be careful oft to say,
To the folk with whom you play,
“ Do not ever take away
Little pixy Peggy ! ”

TO A BABY IN A COT

WE are wise, and oh ! we know it ;
Age has given us conceit ;
We are confident, and show it ;
We are firm upon our feet.

Brian's wise. He does not know it ;
Infancy has no conceit ;
He is wise, and he can show it,
Though he is not firm of feet.

And I wonder what he's dreaming,
As he kicks with tiny feet ;
Are the visions moving, gleaming,
Wiser than our own conceit ?

ON SAVING ONE BELOVED

DROPPED up with pillows, convalescent, cool
From heat of fever ; brand from burning brought
By action swift, born of the anxious thought
Of love's alarm ; the calmness of the pool
Is reached at length, the rapids now are past,
And I have found the haven that I sought.

The fever is forgotten, and the fire is dim ;
I have shot over, as the Indians guide
Their birch canoes ; in lower reaches glide
The water-lily barks below the rapids' rim ;
So I have found the travail of my soul,
And in the finding I am satisfied.

PENNARD

A BALLAD OF A GOWER CASTLE

PENNARD's castle ruined lies,
Speaking wisdom to the wise ;
Flouting visionary things
Nothing but disaster brings ;
For its Prince had castle fair,
Till he did with madness dare
Flout the fairies at his feast ;
Snared by wealth his pride increased ;
Treating seer's words with scorn,
Proudly he rode out at morn ;
But returning to his halls
Found dilapidated walls,
Silted with the yellow sand,
As in present time they stand ;
Elfin laughter shook the air ;
Voices from the sea declare,
" Trust in a material land,
Is a faith that falls to sand ;
Flouting visionary things
Nothing but disaster brings " ;
Pennard's castle ruined lies,
Speaking wisdom to the wise.

DAFYDD AP. GWILYM TO MORFUDD

[When her father proposed to marry her to a rich miser.]

CHOOSE, Cariad, choose, make free your heart's
decision ;

Who flouts the heart shall surely suffer wrong.
In life, in death, which makes the best provision,
The rich man's jingle, or the poor man's song ?

Poor, poor am I, in all of earth's possessions ;
Silver nor gold have I to offer thee ;
Only the riches of love's great confessions,
Only the songs and dreams that dwell in me.

These I will give you, and with them enfold you ;
Poor, but a mantle for your hallowed feet ;
My shawl of love will shelter and will hold you,
When the cold wind is whistling in the street.

Poor, poor am I, in all of earth's possessions ;
Yet rich for ever richer in your love ;
You in the nest, and with my wings upon you,
The storm may rage, but I shall sing above.

LOST EXCALIBUR

“OH that from out the tossing mere of life
 Would rise the brand that Arthur held of old
That shone like meteor in the battle strife,
 But now is lost, and all its fire grown cold !”

Then she who wrought it, answered from the
 mere,
 “Some would not see it, and the few that did
Would hide again : as faltering Bedivere
 The jewelled haft within the rushes hid.

It waits for some one of a matchless hand,
 Who will not falter in the thickest fight,
Who, spurning truce, will use the matchless
 brand
 To fell the false, and to exalt the right.”

VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE

Now and again I meet or hear of them :
The boys and girls I taught in many a class ;
They pass me and repass
In memory's mirror glass.

Jack (who was such a monkey in the school),
Whose curly locks made soft my frowning face,
When he was in disgrace ;
He's winning in life's race.

Gwen (who was like a little winsome elf),
Who smiled so archly when I spoke in praise :
In these advancing days
She roams maternal ways.

And Jim and Margie, Horace and Annette,
In later life do not the days forget
When I their lessons set,
They often tell me yet.

I think of Cyril : I am glad and sad ;
He met me in his khaki on the train ;
Tense muscle and keen brain—
We shall not meet again.

* * * * *

But some one stabbed me to the heart to-day,
With news of one I thought was merely silly ;
To-night in Piccadilly,
You'll find parading—Milly.

A MOOD AT MIDNIGHT

It is the fashion, Night, to praise thy fall ;
To hail the moon and stars invisible by day ;
The mystic spell of night wind ; and to say
How still and beautiful Earth sleeps within thy
hall ;

Yet, you I hate, and when your ebon pall
Falls like a curtain on the stage of Day,
Earth seems to me cold as a corpse ; I say
The sight me saddens and doth me appal.
Something that's sinister is in the cloak of Night ;
There is no healing in its outstretched wings,
Laughter has perished ; Beauty taken flight ;
The birds have knowledge, for no songster sings :
The dark is on my back ; I have no breath :
When comes black Night, the brother of black
Death.

MELODRAMA

A DARKENED room ;
A huddled corpse ;
The furtive eyes of wily Chink ;
A beckoning sign ;
And “ Grr—you swine ! ”
And poisoned vials full of—ink.

The boxes cheer ;
The tiers applaud ;
The canvas has damned holes punched in it ;
The villain leaps
And gives them creeps,
And soon you're fairly in it.

They swallow camels,
Fools like these,
That find the little gnats too bitter ;
Some wiser wit
From out the pit,
By giggling, kills it with a titter.

WHENEVER COMES A CHILD

WHENEVER comes a child, Earth,
Though winter it may be,
The heart of summer beats, Mirth,
The sun is on the sea.
The dancing flowers are gay, Mirth,
The pulse of joy beats wild ;
And heaven is stooping low, Earth,
Whenever comes a child.

Whenever comes a child, God,
You think the thoughts of old ;
Old memory's ways are trod, God,
The scrolls of time unrolled ;
Thy seal is surely set, God,
On mortals thou hast smiled ;
We know you don't forget, God,
Whenever comes a child.

THE WINNING OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

Retold for Children

FROM giant beeches in the enchanted wood,
Where many a hero impotent had stood,
The radiant fleece its wond'rous lustre shed,
And with its light the Argo's heroes led.
Beneath, a monster lashed his furious tail,
And crawled with scales of doubly-coated mail,
Opened its pond'rous jaws, and at the sight
The heart of Jason shuddered with affright.
He, fearful, saw its full foul length unfold,
Its spangled coils of glistening bronze and gold.
Despairing stood the hero, pale in face,
Forboding danger and the dread disgrace,
But then Medea bade the minstrel sing,
Touch into music every trembling string ;
Orpheus arose, and tuned his magic lyre
With Lydian strains as of some unseen choir.
The forest hushed, the rustling leaves grew still,
The dragon, drawn by the great master's will,
Drooped his foul head and shut his glittering eyes.
The silence deepened, by the muse beguiled,
Sleep fell as on the eyelids of a child.
Then Jason forward stepped and seized the prize,
His heart all radiant with a strange surprise ;
Through wood and glen, with joyous steps he sped
To where the ripple laved the vessel red ;
The heroes manned the Argo at his word,
The oars moved like the pinions of a bird,
And to her spoke the dauntless hero-king,
Eager to set her swan-sails on the wing :
" After the toil comes victor crown at last,
The fleece is won, the dangers all are passed ;

Go, Argo, now swift as the swallow flies
To greet the East, where break the morning skies.
He who is tireless in the toils of earth,
Who shuns no danger, and who proves his worth,
The voice celestial he who has obeyed,
The Gods remember and Immortals aid.”
She went with rhythm of her muffled oars
By orient palaces and fragrant shores,
Till, tumbling in the moonlight, once again
Was heard the merry music of the main.
Like horse at hurdles did the Argo leap,
Then passed the bar into the mighty deep.
The oars were still, the panting heroes stayed,
The minstrel Orpheus many a pæan played,
And on the mast the fleece of gold hung free,
Outshone the splendour of the moonlit sea.

HOPE—1922

RAW cold the air ; knife-keen the winter breeze
Touches my face, clammy with winter rain
Just past ; the folk from shelter in the street again
Hurry to cheerful fireside and to slippered ease.
The silhouettes of slender, leafless trees
Stand 'gainst the background of a watery sky,
With panoramic clouds, that floating by,
Pass and repass over the azure seas
Of heaven, bright with a smile that's half a tear,
Like joy returning to a grief-stained face.
We look at clouds in moods of silent fear ;
That dimly veil the secret future's face.
Yet in blue intervals, joyous and silver-clear,
A crescent moon shines in a crescent year.

DEDICATORY

I HAVE had many failures, but with you, dear wife,
Success beyond the dreams of night or day ;
And as I place all on the scales of life,
This one success all sorrows shall outweigh.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

SOME of the inspiration of these verses, as well as of my former volume (*An Exile's Lute*, Erskine Macdonald, Ltd.), is derived from the *Mabinogion*, in the version of Lady Charlotte Guest, and from other Welsh sources. For those unacquainted with the "matter" of Wales, I append these brief notes.

Awen : Inspiration, rhapsody (nearest English equivalent).

Bronwen : White bosom. After many sorrows in Ireland and Britain, died broken-hearted.

Caridwen : A witch, mother of Taliesin, personification of Nature.

Dyfed : South-West Wales.

Elphin : Found Taliesin in his weir (see Thomas Love Peacock's novel).

Gwydion : One of the masters of enchantment. Made a woman out of flowers.

Hiraeth : Yearning, longing (nearest English equivalent).

Kilwch : Gained Olwen after marvellous trials.

Olwen : Lily. Kilwch's bride, one of the beauties of Welsh lore.

Pryderi : Anxiety. Son of Rhiannon. Mysteriously lost when a babe, but later restored.

Rhiannon : Mother of Pryderi and wife of Pwyll. She appeared to her husband in a marvellous fashion. She was charged with Pryderi's death, did penance, but was proved innocent on his reappearance. Her wizard birds held warriors spellbound with their singing.

Taliesin : Radiant Brow. Famous bard. Passed through wonderful transformations till found by Elphin in his weir.

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